

CITY OF ROCHESTER, MN
Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan
Updated 2014

Purpose:

By implementing the provisions in this management plan, the City will take a proactive approach and attempt to spread the costs associated with the outbreak of Emerald Ash Borer over ten to fifteen years. The loss of most every ash tree in Rochester will have a devastating effect on home values, quality of life and the environment. Our goal is to buffer that impact in advance by implementing current arboricultural management activities.

Introduction:

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an introduced pest that is currently killing all species of ash trees (*Fraxinus* sp) in thirteen states and two Canadian provinces. Since its discovery in Detroit, Michigan in 2002, the insect has spread killing all the ash trees in its path. The City of Rochester must prepare and manage for the arrival of EAB on three fronts – street trees, public property (i.e. parks) and trees on private property.

While no one can accurately determine when the insect will arrive in Rochester, our best estimate would be as soon as 2010 from SE Minnesota / SW Wisconsin. According to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture staff – the EAB could already be here - brought here via firewood or from out of state nursery stock.

As of August 2009, with the boulevard tree inventory 99% complete, we have 8,900 ash trees which represent 23.7% of our entire inventoried boulevard tree population. About 53% of all the inventoried ash are rated in good condition, 46% are rated in fair condition, and 1% in poor condition (a poor condition rating is saved for the trees that need to be removed within one year). Our best estimate for the city park lands which includes neighborhood parks, community parks, woodlands, facilities, and golf courses – is approximately 25,000 trees greater than six inches in diameter over an area of 3,500 acres (+7 trees per acre). Private property estimates exceed 47,000 ash.

The current evidence from Michigan and Ohio show that once EAB becomes established – it takes about five to ten years to infest and kill the majority of the ash trees in a city.

The following elements of the City's EAB management plan have been recommended to the park board in 2007, and are subject to periodic revision as new information about the EAB becomes available. This plan is also subject to change should state or federal policies dictate.

Administration:

The Forestry Supervisor (City Forester), though the Park and Recreation Department's Park and Forestry Division, will be responsible for implementing and follow up on the provisions of this plan.

Communication:

The City Administrator, City Council, Park Board, Park and Recreation Director, Park and Forestry Division Head and Park Operations Supervisor will receive periodic updates through normal channels. All media relations will follow normal city protocol.

Boulevard Trees:

1. The City will begin by publicly announcing the policy of excluding any new ash trees on public property and boulevards – with the recommendation that citizens and businesses discontinue the use of ash in new plantings.
2. The City will remove any boulevard ash tree at citizen request if they agree to replace it with an approved and permitted tree.
3. The Park and Forestry Division shall begin to remove any poor quality trees or trees in fair condition with major defects.
4. Ash trees that are removed will be replaced. Species diversity will be a planting objective to better protect our community's trees in the future. This will include planting power line compatible tree species under energized wires. **These plantings are dependent upon adequate funding.**
5. Plantings will occur in the spring and fall per the Park and Forestry Division's operating procedures.

Park Trees:

1. There are many specimen ash trees in City parks, as well as thousands of ash in wooded areas. There is not a full inventory of park trees that exists at this time, but it remains a goal to collect that information.
2. The Park and Forestry Division shall continue to remove any poor quality trees or trees in fair condition with major defects.
3. The City will continue to cooperate with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to establish EAB detection trees as needed in city parks and along the flood control project.

4. Ash trees in wooded areas will be left alone – unless by a bikepath or structure and may cause harm if it falls. If it is an early EAB infestation we will be removing infested trees as needed to slow the spread to the community.
5. Specimen ash trees will be replaced as funding is available. In wooded areas, natural regeneration will play a significant role in reforesting parkland, but invasive/non-native plants will create future management challenges.

Trees on Private Property:

1. There are many thousands of ash tree large and small on private property in Rochester. No reliable inventory exists, and ash densities vary by neighborhood.
2. Property owners are urged to monitor for the EAB.
3. City of Rochester Ordinance 47.01-47.11 Shade Tree Disease Control has been updated to reflect the Emerald Ash Borer threat. The same parameters concerning Dutch Elm Disease and Oak wilt are appropriate measures to slow the spread of EAB.
4. The City will enforce the relevant sections of housing code should it receive complaints about hazardous private trees. This ordinance only reflects the condemnation of 100% dead / standing trees.
5. It would be prudent for residents to establish a relationship with a qualified Arborist now in the event that ash evaluation or removal is desired. Contractors must attain a commercial tree worker license from the City of Rochester.
6. The City also encourages residents to replace trees lost with species appropriate for the site, or to plant new trees in advance of EAB infestation and ash removal as a way of tree canopy cover and lessening the large economic and environmental impact of the Emerald Ash Borer.